

Affecting the well-being of elderly urban residents

23 June 2015, by Deborah Linton

In 15 years, a quarter of the world's population living in cities will be over-60, as more and more people choose to grow old there.

In a unique project where older people were trained as co-researchers to look into the 'age-friendliness' of cities, sociologists from The University of Manchester have found [social inclusion](#) to be the secret to ageing well – while age-friendly transport and housing make them feel more a part of the urban neighbourhoods they live in.

The Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research on Ageing (MICRA) at The University of Manchester, has created a short film, to be shown in public for the first time this week, which shows how the research can be replicated to make a difference to the lives of older generations in cities around the world.

The project was led by Dr Tine Buffel who features in the film alongside some of her 18 older co-investigators, who were aged between 58 and 74-years-old. The 15-minute documentary (which also has a 1.24min trailer) provides a snapshot of the lives of older people living in Whalley Range and Chorlton, in Manchester, which became the first UK [city](#) to be recognised as 'age-friendly' by the World Health Organisation in 2010.

Dr Buffel said: "Older people have the right to feel like their city belongs to them because they make such a large contribution to their city throughout their lives."

The co-researchers worked with The University of Manchester to examine experiences of ageing in three neighbourhoods of the city. They played a key role in identifying questions, recruiting participants and analysing data, interviewing 68 older people who were experiencing varying degrees of poverty and social isolation. They received a training certificate from MICRA at the

end of the project.

Dr Buffel said: "Our older co-researchers were an essential part of the study because they were able to involve people who were particularly isolated in the community. Without this, the views of more socially-excluded people would not have been heard."

"The findings of this project have influenced the city's community development work and shaped the city's plans for developing age-friendly neighbourhoods. The project can now serve as a pilot scheme which can be adopted by other places with actions and strategies that have had a real impact on the 'age-friendliness' of city neighbourhoods."

Councillor Sue Cooley, Manchester City Council's lead for Age-Friendly Manchester, said: "By involving older people from the outset, this new research in Manchester shows some of the small steps that can be made which make a huge difference to the lives of [older people](#) not only in our city but around the world."

Provided by University of Manchester

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